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DE RUEHBR #0658/01 1422051
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 222051Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4359
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0401
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 0172
RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 7516
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4926
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 6217
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0083
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RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0016
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RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0940
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0174
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0028
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 9565
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 7769
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 4096
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRASILIA 000658

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STATE FOR WHA AND NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: BRAZIL AND THE MIDDLE EAST: FOREIGN MINISTRY ON
ITS ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS, ASPA SUMMIT

REF: A. BRASILIA 0043

[1](#)B. BRASILIA 0322

[1](#)C. BRASILIA 477

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Lisa Kubiske. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In an April meeting with CDA between two trips by President Lula to the Middle East, Brazil's senior diplomat for Middle East issues, Under Secretary Roberto Jaguaribe discussed Brazil's positive reactions to President Obama's moves on the Middle East and subtly rejected President Lula's comments criticizing the U.S. role as a peace broker in the region. Jaguaribe was quite clear that Brazil saw a need for Israel to make concessions in order to achieve peace and the necessity of allowing greater involvement of all relevant players in the peace process, to include HAMAS. He also expounded on Brazil's broader outreach to the Middle East, which in addition to playing an active part in Israel-Palestine peace discussions, involves acting as a bridge between Arab countries and Latin American countries through Brazil's leadership of the Arab South American Summit (ASPA) process. Although Jaguaribe downplayed Brazil's importance in the Middle East peace process, Lula's second visit to the region in as many months confirms GOB interest at the highest levels in expanding its Middle East ties. In light of the GOB's enthusiasm for the approach of the new U.S. Administration to Middle East issues, post continues to recommend that we seek ways to encourage closer cooperation toward common objectives. End summary.

Israel-Palestine: Waiting for Godot

[1](#)2. (C) During an early April meeting with Charge d'Affaires, Itamaraty Undersecretary for Political Affairs II Amb. Roberto Jaguaribe offered his reaction to comments by

President Lula in which he criticized U.S. peace efforts in the Middle East and called for and a broader set of countries, including India and South Africa, to play a bigger role in mediating the conflict. Jaguaribe was quick to downplay their significance, noting that Brazil recognized that the only player with a decisive role in the negotiations was the United States. While admitting that the Palestinians "can't get their act together," he focused his aim on Israel for the lack of a breakthrough, and, on the United States as the only player that could steer Israel in another direction.

Jaguaribe animatedly laid the blame for the lack of peace at Israel's feet, sharply criticizing Israel's settlement expansion, the conditions it perpetuates in Gaza, the security wall, as well as its attacks against Gaza.

13. (C) According to Jaguaribe, the only way to resolve the thorny issues is to have all the players sitting at the table, including HAMAS. The recent fighting in Gaza only strengthened HAMAS, not weakened it. As long as conditions in Gaza continue as they are, HAMAS will remain strong. Asked if HAMAS should recognize Israel's right to exist, and whether Brazil could attempt to convince HAMAS to accept this condition, Jaguaribe noted that Brazil "could not convince anyone of anything; Brazil is only a peripheral player."

14. (C) Jaguaribe added that there is great sense of anticipation in the Middle East to see what approach the United States will take. He observed that the Egyptians, the "heart of the Arab world" and the Arab country with the most important role to play, are viewed with suspicion by the

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Palestinians and other Arab countries, which has given an opportunity to Saudi Arabia and other players to step in. But in the end, according to Jaguaribe, 'everyone is waiting for Godot,' in reference to expectations of what U.S. policy will be in the Obama administration. Jaguaribe argued that the fundamental problem for the United States is the perception that the United States and the Western countries are biased against the Arab and Muslim worlds. Arab and Muslim countries see a double standard "when they see the United States do nothing when Israel blocks aid and conduct disproportionate attacks against the Palestinians, but see them condemn Arab countries." That is why President Obama's message in Turkey was important but, he added, was only one element of what it will take to shift perceptions in the Middle East.

ASPA: Brazil Doesn't Care About the Politics

15. (C) Regarding the March 31 ASPA summit, Jaguaribe described it as an effort to diversify relations from the standpoint of both Latin America and the Arab countries. Jaguaribe referred to various ministerials, such as the ones in Buenos Aires and Quito, in which many high-ranking Arab officials who had never before contemplated visiting a Latin American country came away with a new impression and a piqued interest in enhancing their presence in the region. Jaguaribe observed that from Brazil's standpoint, the politics of the summit and the final declarations, which he admitted contained polemical statements regarding issues outside of the objectives of the ASPA summit, are not the most important aspect. What Brazil is seeking is a change in attitude on both sides. Countries in the "periphery" should not have to rely on news media to learn and know about other countries in the "periphery." ASPA has helped increase direct contacts between the two regions and has led to an "exponential" increase in the number of visits by high ranking Arab leaders.

Comment: Determined to Play

¶6. (C) Consistent with Brazil's broader effort to expand its foreign policy reach in line with its overriding interest in a permanent UN Security Council seat, the GOB at the highest levels is engaging Middle Eastern countries. Lula's recent visit to Saudi Arabia and Turkey is his second to the region in as many months. It follows FM Amorim's visits to Syria, Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank (ref A), Egypt (to make a pledge at Sharm el Sheikh, ref B), and Iran (ref C). Brazil's engagement is being accompanied by a growing number of reciprocal visits from regional leaders. Jaguaribe's downplaying of Brazil's role in the Middle East peace process notwithstanding, the GOB seems determined to keep the seat at the table it won in the Annapolis process. Although GOB officials tout Brazil's ability to talk with all parties as potentially helpful in facilitating dialogue in the region, their effort to justify biased statements in the ASPA declaration and to separate their interest in the peace process from other activities in the region is indicative of the lack of an in-depth understanding of regional dynamics. In light of the GOB's determination to engage and its enthusiasm for the approach of the new U.S. Administration to Middle East issues, post continues to recommend that we seek ways to encourage closer cooperation toward common objectives.

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